

2022-02-11: U.S. media roll-up: “Freedom Convoy” Protest (as of 3pmET)

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Attachments: FLAGGING: PM Presser on Illegal Trucker Blockades and on the Situation in Ukraine (158.21 kB); IB_WSHDC-#767803-v1-2022-02-11 REACTIONS to protests from Governors_States .DOCX (19.25 kB); 2022-02-11 PM - TWITTER SNAPSHOT TRUCKER PROTEST.docx (15.23 kB); Trucker Protest Rollup 2 (Feb 11).docx (28.46 kB)

New set of articles below (and attached)

Of note this afternoon: PM and POTUS spoke (WH readout below); PM Trudeau held a press conference (transcript attached); US Chamber of Commerce issued statement, *Business leaders urge resolution of US-Canada Border Blockade*

Attached: Reactions from Governors/States and updated Twitter snapshot

At today's WH press briefing, Jen Psaki confirmed that PM Trudeau and President Biden spoke today regarding the ongoing protest and multiple border closures. She was asked what the President is doing to help alleviate the blockades at the border and trade issues stemming from this—she noted the US (from the President down) have been in direct touch with their Canadian counterparts to address the blockades and the challenges they are posing to the supply chain. She noted while Administration believes in the ability to protest, it has the potential to have a huge impact on workers and the American public. As far as helping to alleviate the situation, the US is helping to create detour routes to cross the border. Regarding reports of a similar “Freedom Convoy” arriving in DC sometime in March, she noted that DHS is aware and is taking steps to make sure it does not disrupt lawful trade and transportation or interfere with the federal government or law enforcement. Regarding reports that a “Freedom Convoy” could begin in Los Angeles and potentially disrupt the Super Bowl, DHS is surging additional staff to the area.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 11, 2022

Readout of President Biden's Call With Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada

Today President Biden spoke with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada to discuss the ongoing blockade of key bridges and crossings between the United States and Canada, including Detroit/Windsor, Sweetwater/Coutts, and Pembina/Emerson. The two leaders agreed that the actions of the individuals who are obstructing travel and commerce between our two countries are having significant direct impacts on citizens' lives and livelihoods. The President expressed his concern that U.S. companies and workers are experiencing serious effects, including slowdowns in production, shortened work hours, and plant closures. The Prime Minister promised quick action in enforcing the law, and the President thanked him for the steps he and other Canadian authorities are taking to restore the open passage of bridges to the United States. In turn, the Prime Minister thanked the President and his administration, the Governor of Michigan, and US officials for all of the assistance that the United States is providing to resolve this disruption. The two leaders agreed to stay in close touch in the days ahead to ensure that the free flow of traffic is restored at these vital transit points.

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Abbreviated Articles

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NBC News, David K. Li, 11 February 2022

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Canada's Trucker Protests Could Spread

The Atlantic, David Frum, 11 February 2022

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Since January 28, Canada's capital city of Ottawa has been under siege by a convoy of angry truckers — a two-week running protest that has drawn support from right-wing extremists in Canada and abroad.

Canadian trucker protest: A day in the life

Fox Business, Kristen Altus, 11 February 2022

In the early morning hours on Friday, Ottawa's Ambassador Bridge was quiet, with not many people in sight. Instead, the low hums of semi-trucks gently rattled the streets surrounding Canada's Parliament.

The Canadian protesters aren't just truckers. Here's who has been showing up and what they want

CNN, Paula Newton, 11 February 2022

A massive protest by Canadian truckers and others against Covid-19 mandates has been growing for weeks, crippling three US border crossings and downtown Ottawa -- with no end in sight.

Full Articles

Ontario premier declares emergency, tells truckers to go home and end protest

NBC News, David K. Li, 11 February 2022

Ontario Premier Doug Ford declared a state of emergency on Friday and said he'll use all government resources to end a two-week protest by Canadian truckers over Covid-19 rules.

Ford said the trucker protest amounts to a "siege" of downtown Ottawa and the Ambassador Bridge, which connects Windsor and Detroit.

"It's an illegal occupation," Ford told reporters. "This is no longer a protest."

Ford told protesters to go home and threatened heavy fines — but stopped just short of saying he's ordering immediate police action to clear streets.

"I want to make it very clear that I do not, I repeat do not, direct the police," Ford said.

"We make the laws. The police enforce the laws. But again we cannot ... have people occupying cities, holding them hostage, holding millions and millions of people hostage to go to their jobs and tens and tens and tens of thousands of people (who) cannot go do their job."

Truckers had been staging a protest that had shut down Ottawa's core over various Covid-19 rules, leading the mayor of Canada's capital to declare a city state of emergency on Sunday.

Dubbed the "Freedom Convoy," hundreds of protesters have been using their trucks to block city streets, blare their horns and disrupt traffic.

Ford, the brother of late former Toronto Mayor Rob Ford, said he respects the right of truckers to protests, "but like all rights, these are not without reasonable limits."

"There is a wide difference between a demonstration that people make their point and go home and people (who) put their lives, their family's lives and communities at risk," Ontario Solicitor General Sylvia Jones said.

"That's unfortunately what we are now seeing in Windsor and of course in Ottawa for the last number of days, over a week."

Bridge traffic has been blocked or severely restricted for five days, leading to serious economic consequences south of the border, Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said.

"In Michigan, our economic momentum is at risk because commercial traffic is at a standstill at the Ambassador Bridge and heavily backed up at the Blue Water Bridge," she said in a statement on Friday. "I'm continuing to take action to ensure Michigan workers and families are supported."

The protest has also sparked backlash in both Ottawa and across Canada over alleged harassment as well as the presence of Confederate flags and flags bearing swastikas.

A slim majority of Canadians do not back the truckers' actions, according to an Ipsos poll.

Canada's Trucker Protests Could Spread

The Atlantic, David Frum, 11 February 2022

Within a week of the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, demonstrators were marching in the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Canada, Australia, and many other countries. The European and Asian protesters mimicked the style and symbolism of the protests in the United States: taking a knee, pulling down statues. In the social-media age, all protests are potentially global.

So it is now, with this month's protests in Canada, in which truckers opposed to that country's vaccination requirements have besieged the national capital and blockaded international crossings crucial to Canada's economy. The truck-blockade movement that started in Canada is being mimicked in New Zealand, France, and Belgium. U.S. law enforcement is bracing for somebody to try something similar south of the border on Super Bowl Sunday, of all holy days. Much of the money donated in support of the Canadian protests has been raised internationally, especially in the United States. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, and presidential son Donald Trump Jr. are only some of the Republicans who have voiced support for the protesters. The style and symbolism of this event, too, seem strangely nonlocal. One of the most photographed movements of the protests has been a man on horseback hoisting a trump 2024 flag in downtown Ottawa. Confederate flags and MAGA hats have been adopted into a global library of anti-establishment iconography.

The effects of the protests are becoming global too. Trucks are obstructing the Ambassador Bridge between Windsor, Ontario, and Detroit. That's the busiest of all the border crossings between the United States and Canada, crucial to moving auto parts. Obstructions have been reported at border crossings in Alberta and Manitoba as well. Another convoy is trying to impede the main road from Manitoba to Ontario. Yesterday, protesters attempted to block access to Ottawa's airport.

The blockades are very much a rogue movement. They have been condemned by the Canadian Trucking Alliance and Canada's Teamsters Union. About 90 percent of Canadian truck drivers are vaccinated; comparatively few of those protesting are professional truck drivers. The protesters are not anti-lockdown. They are anti-vaccination. The spark for the protests was a requirement that truckers be vaccinated to cross the U.S.-Canada border. This is not a movement of "working class" protesters against remote, affluent elites. The burden of the protests has fallen on Ottawa residents, whose streets have been paralyzed, and Canadian autoworkers, who face factory shutdowns because of cross-border disruptions.

About 32 percent of Canadians express broad sympathy with the protests. That's not popularity, but it's not crippling unpopularity either. Justin Trudeau is Canada's prime minister on the strength of 32.6 percent of the votes cast in the 2021 federal election. And although the most obnoxious acts of the protesters have provoked almost universal revulsion, it's by no means clear that they will ultimately lose this trial of political strength. Voters everywhere expect governments to keep order, and if governments cannot or will not do the job, the people in charge of those governments will pay the political price. There may not be a lot of room for the truckers' popularity to rise. There's a lot of room for Trudeau's popularity to fall. This drama is unfolding on Ottawa streets, framed on television screens by the skyline of the Canadian federal Parliament. Canadians will not blame the chief of the Ottawa police force if the blockades continue. They will not blame the Ontario provincial police, or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or the provincial premiers. It's the authority of the national government that is being challenged—it is the national economy that is being disrupted—and it's the head of the national government to whom Canadians will look for a resolution. If Trudeau does not or cannot deliver that resolution, he will pay the price.

This crisis may be building to something truly dangerous. Trudeau has to act, but Canada may lack the means to act effectively and decisively enough to end the protests without harm to protesters or police. A big show of force may persuade protesters to return home quietly. A not-so-big show may tempt them to resist and see what happens. The province of Ontario will reportedly introduce emergency legislation today. That could test the issue.

If a crackdown goes bad in Canada, the negative consequences may not be confined to the country. The truck disruptions have shocked Canadians because Canada is generally an extremely law-

abiding place. To a great extent, Canada still is law-abiding: When a court ordered the truck protesters to cease blaring their horns, the horn-blaring ceased. If the practice of using trucks as rolling fortifications were to spread south of the border, however, it could mobilize American protesters, who are less law-compliant than their Canadian counterparts.

Politically motivated violence in America has been on the rise in the past half-dozen years: the riots and looting in U.S. cities after Floyd's murder; the takeover of a portion of Portland, Oregon, by left-wing militants; the attempted kidnapping of Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer by anti-vaccination extremists, all preceding the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol—and whatever comes next.

Maybe this latest form of performative intimidation is only being road tested in Ottawa. It could be coming to American cities soon.

The Canadian trucker convoy is an unpopular uprising

Vox, Zack Beauchamp, 11 February 2022

Since January 28, Canada's capital city of Ottawa has been under siege by a convoy of angry truckers — a two-week running protest that has drawn support from right-wing extremists in Canada and abroad.

The so-called "freedom convoy" is nominally protesting a vaccine mandate for truckers, implemented in mid-January on both sides of the US-Canada border. But the demonstrations have swiftly ballooned into a broader far-right movement, with some demonstrators waving Confederate and Nazi flags. Protester demands include an end to all Covid-19 restrictions in Canada and the resignation of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

The demonstrators, which have included as many as 8,000 people at their peak, have terrorized Ottawa: blockading streets, harassing citizens, forcing business closures, and honking their extremely loud horns all night. Ottawa police, who have proven some combination of unwilling and unable to restore order, have even set up a special hotline to deal with a deluge of alleged hate crimes stemming from the protests. In the first week of February, it received over 200 calls.

Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson has declared a state of emergency, and Trudeau's government has deployed hundreds of Royal Canadian Mounted Police to the protests. As the situation in Ottawa continues, the freedom convoy movement has expanded across the country. Demonstrators have shut down at least two border crossings between Canada and the United States.

But while the protests are generating a lot of noise and attention, the eruption actually points up a counterintuitive fact: The Canadian far right is weak and ineffectual, especially when it comes to pandemic restrictions.

Canada's provinces have generally employed strict Covid-19 measures such as school mask mandates and vaccine passports, including during the recent omicron surge. They have enjoyed broad public support in doing so; even the strictest restrictions are less controversial in Canada than in the US. The current demonstration is quite unpopular with the general public, divisive even inside the center-right Conservative party.

This doesn't mean the movement will accomplish nothing. It has already contributed to a revolt against the Conservative party's leader and is serving as an important organizing node for far-rightists. The border crossing blockage is putting more stress on the US-Canada supply chain, costing (by one estimation) \$300 million a day in economic damage. Internationally, the freedom convoy has inspired copycat efforts in both the United States and France.

But it's important to understand the broader context in Canada. News coverage of the convoy, especially from sympathetic anchors on Fox News, may lead Americans to believe that Canada is in the midst of a far-right popular uprising. In reality, the mainstream consensus in Canada about Covid-

19, and the nation's institutions in general, is holding. The so-called trucker movement is on the fringe, including among Canadian truckers — some 90 percent of whom are vaccinated.

They are angry because they have lost.

Canadians against “truckers”

I've been to Canada several times since the beginning of the pandemic, driving over the Peace Bridge from Buffalo into southern Ontario. The differences between the two countries become apparent almost immediately upon crossing the border. At gas stations and rest stops in upstate New York, masks are treated as optional at best; once you cross the border, virtually everyone you see indoors is masked up. When my daughter developed a fever from an ear infection, I was asked to provide a negative Covid-19 test upon entry to an urgent care facility; without one, we were told we would have been turned away.

My experiences reflect the country's much stricter government policies. Vaccine passports, school mask mandates, and even bans on private indoor gatherings larger than 10 people have been widely used across Canadian provinces. Even Alberta, the prairie heart of Canadian conservatism, had imposed all three — with Jason Kenney, the province's Conservative premier, arguing in September that a passport system was “the only way to cut viral transmission without destroying businesses.”

Alberta and several other Canadian provinces are now in the process of lifting some of the more burdensome restrictions. But this generally reflects the omicron surge's ebb rather a wave of public opposition; in Ontario, home to Ottawa and Toronto, the Conservative provincial government is following a preexisting reopening script pegged to a decline in case counts and hospitalizations. Some provincial leaders, like Quebec's François Legault, noted that reopening plans were in no way influenced by trucker shenanigans.

There is a reason Canadian politicians have taken this stance: Poll after poll finds Canadians have widely supported restrictive pandemic policies at both the federal and provincial levels. This is not to say they enjoy restrictions on their freedoms — who does? — but simply that they believe the government has an obligation to act when case counts are high.

This is especially clear when it comes to coercive vaccination rules, ostensibly the freedom convoy's main target.

The January edition of the Covid-19 Monitor, a regular survey of Canadian attitudes about the pandemic, finds that about three-quarters of Canadians support vaccine passports for indoor dining and gatherings. Strikingly, 70 percent would “strongly” or “somewhat” support a vaccine mandate for all eligible adults — a vastly more restrictive policy than any province has actually attempted. What's more, the researchers behind Covid-19 Monitor find that, on most issues, “support has remained relatively stable” throughout the pandemic — strong evidence that this isn't just a short-term blip caused by omicron.

It makes sense, then, that the trucker protest is widely unpopular.

The polling firm Innovative Research Group has conducted three separate rounds of polling since the beginning of the convoy, and found that public opposition has risen as the protest has gone on. In their most recent survey, conducted February 4-9, a scant 29 percent of Canadians expressed support for “the idea of the protest” while 53 percent disapproved.

A separate survey by Léger, released on February 8, found that 62 percent of Canadians oppose “the message that the trucker convoy protests are conveying of no vaccine mandates and less public health measures.” Sixty-five percent of respondents agreed that the demonstrators represented a “small minority of Canadians who are thinking only about themselves.”

Why the trucker protest matters, even though they're losing

It's worth emphasizing that a movement does not have to be popular with a majority to have influence.

During the trucker protests, an uprising against Conservative Party Leader Erin O'Toole succeeded in toppling him from the top spot. The challenge was fueled, in part, by Conservative members of Parliament frustrated by O'Toole's equivocal stance on the convoy, with many in the ranks calling on the party to embrace the truckers.

The leadership challenge points to the bigger effect of the protest: It is a rare action by the Canadian far right that's gaining mainstream attention and backing. "Even if the trucker protests do recede, their show of strength has won them demonstrable support abroad, including financial support, and has established large communities online that could fuel future activity," the New York Times's Max Fisher writes.

The protests have had notable international reach, becoming a cause célèbre for anti-restriction conservatives in the US and Europe. Sixty-three percent of the donations to the truckers' now-removed GoFundMe came from the United States; the American right reportedly played an important role in getting the protest off the ground. It's also now inspiring actions elsewhere: An American convoy is scheduled to depart from California on March 4, with Washington as its ultimate destination. A similar French effort is already on its way to Paris, with police vowing to bar its entry to the capital.

Yet the fact that so much of the so-called trucker movement's support seems to be coming from abroad is telling.

The reality is that a combination of factors, ranging from the structure of the Canadian political system to widespread acceptance of liberal cultural values, have made its government especially resistant to far-right radicalism. On issues ranging from Covid-19 to immigration to abortion, the mainstream consensus has held.

The freedom convoy's willingness to disrupt life in Canada's capital is less a sign of an incipient popular uprising than the lashing out of a minority that has little influence at the ballot box.

Canadian trucker protest: A day in the life

Fox Business, Kristen Altus, 11 February 2022

In the early morning hours on Friday, Ottawa's Ambassador Bridge was quiet, with not many people in sight. Instead, the low hums of semi-trucks gently rattled the streets surrounding Canada's Parliament.

The Freedom Convoy has gained strength and numbers since the movement started nearly three weeks ago by Canadian truckers protesting the country's COVID-19 vaccine mandate.

"One of the main reasons is for kids, and also for all the injustice that we've been living for the past two years," protester and contractor Danick Venne told FOX Business' Jeff Flock.

"I'm sick and tired of people trying to tell me they can vaccinate my children without my permission," a truck driver named David added. "I'm sick and tired of them canceling school when there's no reason for it."

David said the campaign is bigger than truckers' rights: "We haven't even gotten started about the carbon tax that's killing the trucking industry."

Although he's not a truck driver himself, Venne said he traveled to volunteer for the cause, providing security, food, coffee, fuel, even helping to build a tall, wooden podium so voices can be heard loud and clear.

"I come here and volunteer and give help and love to everybody," Venne, while standing in front of red and white painted signs that read "Canada loves truckers," "Freedom Heroes," and "One Love," explained.

"Every time I have spare time, I go help," he continued. "I go serve coffee if I can, or anything I will do to help."

Another group of non-truckers joined the protesters to serve hot food on Ottawa's closed roads, further attesting to the outpouring of community support.

"We had an officer donate \$600 in food," one of the men said. "Ridgetown Tim Horton's supported us with Tim cards to give the people."

While the Freedom Convoy protesters share a passionate, communal spirit, their ongoing bridge blockade is starting to create economic problems.

Ford and Stellantis, the parent company of Chrysler, say the four-day standstill on the Ambassador Bridge, which connects Detroit to the city of Windsor, Ontario, will pile more problems onto an already-strained supply chain.

The disruptions have even forced Ford to cut work shifts at some of its U.S. and Canadian factories.

"This interruption on the Detroit/Windsor bridge hurts customers, autoworkers, suppliers, communities and companies on both sides of the border that are already two years into parts shortages resulting from the global semiconductor issue, COVID and more," Ford told FOX Business in a statement Thursday.

"We hope this situation is resolved quickly because it could have widespread impact on all automakers in the U.S. and Canada," the company continued.

But the future of the Freedom Convoy remains unclear. An Ontario court Thursday froze millions of dollars in the GiveSendGo account of "Freedom Convoy 2022" on Thursday which had raked more than \$10 million in donations.

The Associated Press also reported Friday that the Biden administration has urged Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to use federal powers and end the standoff.

Freedom Convoy's lead attorney Keith Wilson called out Trudeau for characterizing the protesters as "Nazis" and a "fringe minority" Wednesday on "The Evening Edit."

"It's troubling that the prime minister of our country is now characterizing hardworking Canadians, who during COVID, delivered food and critical supplies, and put themselves at risk to whatever risk imposed," Wilson said. "And now, suddenly, for political opportunism, he's characterizing these hardworking truckers who are trying to protect their charter rights."

The Canadian protesters aren't just truckers. Here's who has been showing up and what they want

CNN, Paula Newton, 11 February 2022

A massive protest by Canadian truckers and others against Covid-19 mandates has been growing for weeks, crippling three US border crossings and downtown Ottawa -- with no end in sight.

So, why are the demonstrations happening now? What exactly are they about? And what's being done to address them? Here are some key questions and answers about Canada's Covid-19 protests. What are truckers protesting in Canada?

Thousands of truckers are participating in the so-called "Freedom Convoy," fighting a vaccine mandate that is forcing all Canadian truckers crossing the US-Canadian border to be fully vaccinated or face quarantine in their homes for two weeks when they return.

The rule went into effect in mid-January in Canada and January 22 in the United States. The US Department of Homeland Security now requires noncitizens entering the United States via border crossings or ferry terminals along the US northern and southern borders be fully vaccinated against Covid-19.

Before this mandate, truckers were exempted from the vaccine requirement and permitted to cross the border, at times testing for Covid-19, even during the 18-month period that the border was closed to nonessential traffic. Truckers were considered vital to keeping supply chains functioning normally.

Nearly 90% of Canada's truckers are fully vaccinated and eligible to cross the border, according to the Canadian government. So, the protesting truckers represent a "small, fringe minority," Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said, adding early on that his government did not expect the vaccine mandate to significantly affect supply chains.

How have the protests evolved?

The Freedom Convoy of truckers began its protest in January in Canada's western provinces, with the goal of reaching the nation's capital, Ottawa, and continuing to protest until the vaccine mandate was lifted.

On its cross-country journey, the protest has attracted support from thousands more Canadians, even some who are fully vaccinated, who say they want all Covid-19 preventative measures dropped, including mask mandates, lockdowns and restrictions on gatherings.

A large, noisy convoy, including hundreds of trucks and other vehicles, descended January 29 on Ottawa. Since then, they have snarled traffic and honked often and loudly. Protesters in more than 60 vehicles also disrupted traffic at Ottawa International Airport on Thursday, circling the arrivals and departure terminals, airport officials said.

In several other large Canadian cities and towns, protest crowds emerged over the first weekend of February with hundreds of trucks and thousands of protesters. Rallies also took place in Toronto, Quebec City, Vancouver and Winnipeg.

Meantime, Friday marked the fifth day protesters impeded access to the Ambassador Bridge, which connects Detroit and Windsor, Ontario -- the busiest international crossing in North America.

In addition, a mix of semi-trailers and farm equipment shut down the border crossing connecting Emerson, Manitoba, and Pembina, North Dakota, according to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Manitoba. The Coutts access point between Alberta and Montana has also been blocked.

Similar protests soon could erupt in the United States, including around Sunday's Super Bowl in Southern California, American officials warn. Right-wing media outlets have raised the prospect of like-minded rallies in the US and offered positive coverage of those in Canada.

What do the protesters want?

Protesters will remain in Ottawa "for as long as it takes for governments across Canada to end all mandates" associated with Covid-19, Freedom Convoy organizers said last week in a statement.

Some want Trudeau to speak with them and hear their opposition to the mandates and restrictions, those protesters told CNN. Trudeau has no intention of meeting with protesters, who hold views "unacceptable" to most Canadians, he has said.

What has the impact been on Canadians?

The blockades have slowed the movement of goods and caused production problems at car manufacturing plants along the border. Ford, General Motors and Stellantis have all announced auto production issues in Canada.

The Ambassador Bridge "is too essential to both of our national economies, and ... puts a lot of bread on the table for our families on both sides of the border," Windsor, Ontario, Mayor Drew Dilkens told CNN this week.

In Ottawa, residents and service providers in the downtown core feel like hostages in a city under siege, they've told CNN. Most businesses in the area have been forced to close; they include a large mall next to the protest site.

Dozens of trucks remain in Ottawa's downtown core in what local officials have described as an "occupation." The police chief calls it "unlawful," as property damage, thefts and mischief have been reported, along with hundreds of alleged hate crimes. Some 1,000 calls related to the demonstration have been received, plus 25 arrests made and more than 1,500 traffic and other tickets issued, police said Thursday.

A judge this week signed a temporary injunction that prevents protesters in Ottawa from using horns during their demonstrations, court documents show.

Dilkens is expected in court Friday to seek an injunction that would expand police's authority to respond to the protesters, he said Thursday. If the protesters are "unwilling to move on," the mayor said, tow trucks and equipment would be brought in to help "move the vehicles out of the way" to reopen the border crossing.

What has PM Justin Trudeau said about all this?

Trudeau, who is fully vaccinated and boosted, has said the protesters do not represent the vast majority of Canadians, about 80% of whom have opted to get fully vaccinated. Most believe public health restrictions save lives, the Prime Minister has said.

He implored protesters parked in trucks right outside the parliament building Monday to end their demonstration.

"Individuals are trying to blockade our economy, our democracy and our fellow citizens' daily lives. It has to stop," Trudeau said during an emergency debate in Ottawa that marked his first public appearance since isolating after he and some members of his family contracted the coronavirus.

The Prime Minister acknowledged that protesters have a right to voice their concerns but said residents don't deserve to be harassed in their own neighborhoods.

"This pandemic has sucked for all Canadians, but Canadians know the way to get through it is continuing to listen to science, continuing to lean on each other, continuing to be there for each other," Trudeau said after underscoring that Canadians are tired of Covid-19 health restrictions.

By Thursday, the Prime Minister was employing stronger language in a series of tweets: "The illegal blockades and occupations happening across the country ... (are) harming the communities they're taking place in -- and they're hurting jobs, businesses, and our country's economy."

Trudeau had spoken with Windsor's mayor "about the illegal blockade of the Ambassador Bridge ... because it is causing real harm to workers and economies on both sides of the border," he tweeted.

He'd also spoken with opposition party leaders, asking all lawmakers to "denounce these illegal acts -- and to call for an end to these blockades."

About 80% of Canadians are vaccinated. Why so much angst now?

Almost 4 of every 5 Canadians are vaccinated, according to the Canadian government. However, provincial governments and the federal government have enforced various vaccine mandates, stoking ire among those politically opposed and fatigue among others as the pandemic hits its two-year mark.

At the federal and provincial level, Canada has enforced some of the strictest Covid-19 measures in the world, with widespread mask mandates and restrictions on the size of gatherings, not only at large events and restaurants but also in private homes.

A vocal minority of Canadians says they agree with the truckers' protest, saying it is time to drop most Covid-19 restrictions. With so many Canadians complying for so long with vaccine and mask mandates and other Covid-19 measures, some say public health officials and government leaders are now going too far.

As one couple who said they are fully vaccinated feel they did their part and now they want to move on, they told CNN.

Had Canadians staged serious protests over Covid-19 rules before this?

Various smaller protests took place across the country against health measures and mandates in 2020 and 2021. However, this is the largest and most widespread protest of its kind to date during the pandemic.

What Covid-19 rules are in place for Canadians who are not truckers?

Several provinces are beginning to drop some mitigation measures and allow the reopening of restaurant dining rooms, theaters, cinemas and gyms, albeit with capacity restrictions.

Decisions about most of these health restrictions and how and when to ease them are determined not by the Trudeau government but by individual provinces.

There is still a federal vaccine mandate for passengers traveling by air domestically or internationally. In addition, all federal public servants are required to be fully vaccinated as a condition of employment.

How might the Covid-19 protests end?

Possible solutions include persuading protesters to disburse voluntarily; the government giving into demands; and police removing the protesters. Military force is considered highly unlikely as Canada's armed forces are not a police force and they "are not involved in law enforcement in this situation," Defense Minister Anita Anand told CNN.

The Trudeau government will send more officers to protests across the country, saying Thursday the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Canada's national police force, continues to show decisive action.

"The RCMP are going to be sending additional reinforcements to Ottawa. I also can advise that the RCMP will be sending reinforcements to Windsor and in addition to that the RCMP have added additional resources at Coutts, in Alberta," said Marco Mendicino, Canada's public safety minister.

"Our top priority is to make sure that these illegal blockades end," he said.

From: Lambo, Pam -WSHDC -WS -PA
Sent: February 11, 2022 11:19 AM
To: Loken, Martin -WSHDC -GR <Martin.Loken@international.gc.ca>; McIntyre, Graeme -WSHDC -GR <Graeme.McIntyre@international.gc.ca>; Holmes, Michael -WSHDC -GR <Michael.Holmes@international.gc.ca>; Maisonneuve, Mélanie -WSHDC -BF <Melanie.Maisonneuve@international.gc.ca>; Kiameh, Madeleine -WSHDC -BF <Madeleine.Kiameh@international.gc.ca>; Fanning, Tammy -WSHDC -BF <Tammy.Fanning@international.gc.ca>; Stendardo, Frank -WSHDC -TD <Frank.Stendardo@international.gc.ca>; 'Arseneau, Michel' <michel.arseneau@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; 'McGraw, Mathews' <mathews.mcgraw@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; Gordon, Sean -WSHDC -PL <Sean.Gordon@international.gc.ca>
Cc: Baird, Katherine -WSHDC -DHOM/CDMA <Katherine.Baird@international.gc.ca>; Grant, Heather -WSHDC -WS <Heather.Grant@international.gc.ca>; Bélanger, Jérôme -WSHDC -GR <Jerome.Belanger@international.gc.ca>; *WSHDC-Media Relations <D-WSHDC-MediaRelations@international.gc.ca>; Parsons, Alanna -NGB <Alanna.Parsons@international.gc.ca>; Barratt, Adam -WSHDC -WS <Adam.Barratt@international.gc.ca>; Boudreau, Wendy -WSHDC -WS <Wendy.Boudreau@international.gc.ca>; Maron, Stefano -WSHDC -WS <Stefano.Maron@international.gc.ca>; Fisher, Dani -MNPLS -GR <dani.fisher@international.gc.ca>; Connell, Christine -DTROT -GR <Christine.Connell@international.gc.ca>; Denter, Christian -NGB <Christian.Denter@international.gc.ca>
Subject: 2022-02-11: U.S. media roll-up: "Freedom Convoy" Protest

See full media articles below (and attached).

Also attached: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau convenes the Incident Response Group, Twitter Snapshot and congressional reaction

A number of national security experts are featured in reporting by National Public Radio noting that authorities are increasingly wary of the extremist views on display and "some of the most well-known radicals in this country have now descended upon the capital". NPR's Emma Jacobs went to Ottawa to interview demonstrators – one of whom said "it's a civil war between the government and its people". Canadian Stephanie Carvin, a national security expert, reports that authorities don't want to take responsibility for the protests – "there's a reluctance to even just hand out parking tickets. It is a baffling kind of collapse in authority". Latest updates from DHS to media are that the US trucker protest could begin "as early as this weekend" in Southern California and "spread" to Washington around the President's State of the Union Address on March 1. There is also reporting by CNN that indicates the Ottawa International Airport put out a statement about "60 to 70 vehicles" attempting to disrupt traffic by "circling the arrivals and departure terminals".

NBC News reports how the trucker protests are hurting auto plants across North America, noting that the truck blockade at the Ambassador Bridge is hurting plants as far away as Kentucky and redirecting truck traffic isn't enough. The CEO of the non-profit Center for Automotive Research notes the "mess" and the "strangled" plants in Canada. Noting the impact on production, the President of the American Automotive Policy Council expressed "appreciation" for the U.S. government trying to facilitate commerce but said Canadian officials need to address the "upheaval" and get bridges and transit routes back open". CNN headlines suggest the blockades are spreading – *Access to three US-Canada border crossings cut off by trucker protest blockades* – Michigan, North Dakota and Montana. The Detroit Free Press is reporting that General Motors is "chartering cargo planes to fly parts stuck at the border over the Detroit River and into the U.S. to keep a critical truck plant going in Indiana".

There's also reporting by the Associated Press about the growing number of conservative U.S. media figures who are "lining up" in support of Canadian truckers – and it's not just FOX News. Ben Shapiro – "Nobody wants giant bridges shut down. Obstructing traffic is bad no matter what you are protesting for. However, the cause of this protest happens to be righteous". Tucker Carlson adds, "The trucker convoy in Canada is pretty cool. People getting together to promote human rights. Who's against that?" Lara Trump offered her support as well, "right here in America, people are cheering them on, because this is about freedom".

Media also reporting extensively on White House comment that Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg urged their Canadian counterparts to "use federal powers to resolve this situation" and offered the support of their departments. This dialogue is also referenced in the attached statement from the Prime Minister.

Abbreviated Articles

US urges Canada to use federal powers to end bridge blockade

Associated Press, Rob Gillies and Tom Krisher, 11 February 2022

The Biden administration urged Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government Thursday to use its federal powers to end the truck blockade by Canadians protesting the country's COVID-19 restrictions, as the bumper-to-bumper demonstration forced auto plants on both sides of the border to shut down or scale back production.

U.S., Canada scramble for levers to end the Ambassador Bridge blockade

Politico, Tanya Snyder, 10 February 2022

Governments on both sides of the Canadian border are mobilizing to figure out how to end the bridge blockade that has snarled travel and freight movement between Detroit and Windsor, Ontario.

G.M. cancels shifts at a Michigan plant as protests spread disruption.

New York Times, Ana Swanson and Jack Ewing, 10 February 2022

General Motors is the latest automaker to suspend production because of protests at a crucial Canadian border crossing that have disrupted supply chains already in turmoil because of the pandemic.

Canadian trucker protests start to hurt auto plants nationwide

NBC News, Paul A. Eisenstein, 11 February 2022

Like falling dominoes, automakers across North America are adding to the list of plants affected by the truck blockade that has all but halted traffic across two of the busiest routes linking the U.S. and Canada.

The Ottawa trucker protest is rooted in extremism, a national security expert says

NPR, Nell Clark, 10 February 2022

Massive protests by truckers opposing pandemic precautions continue to ensnare traffic in Canada. Authorities are increasingly wary of the extremist views on display during the demonstrations, which some have dubbed the "Freedom Convoy."

Full Articles

US urges Canada to use federal powers to end bridge blockade

Associated Press, Rob Gillies and Tom Krisher, 11 February 2022

The Biden administration urged Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government Thursday to use its federal powers to end the truck blockade by Canadians protesting the country's COVID-19 restrictions, as the bumper-to-bumper demonstration forced auto plants on both sides of the border to shut down or scale back production.

For the fourth straight day, scores of truckers taking part in what they dubbed the Freedom Convoy blocked the Ambassador Bridge connecting Windsor, Ontario, to Detroit, disrupting the flow of auto parts and other products between the two countries.

The White House said Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg spoke with their Canadian counterparts and urged them to help resolve the standoff.

Federal Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino said Royal Canadian Mounted Police reinforcements are being sent to Windsor, Ottawa and Coutts, Alberta where another border blockade is happening.

Trudeau met virtually with leaders of Canada's opposition late Thursday and said he spoke with Windsor's mayor. Trudeau's office said there is a willingness to "respond with whatever it takes" to end the blockades.

Conservative Ontario Premier Doug Ford, meanwhile, moved to cut off funding for the protests by successfully asking a court to freeze millions of dollars in donations to the convoy through crowd-funding site GiveSendGo. Ford has called the protests an occupation.

Canadian officials previously got GoFundMe to cut off funding after protest organizers used the site to raise about 10 million Canadian dollars (\$7.8 million). GoFundMe determined that the fundraising effort violated the site's terms of service due to unlawful activity.

With political and economic pressure mounting, Windsor Mayor Drew Dilkens announced the city will seek a court injunction to end the occupation.

"The economic harm is not sustainable and it must come to an end," he said.

In the U.S., authorities braced for the possibility of similar truck-borne protests inspired by the Canadians, and authorities in Paris and Belgium banned road blockades to head off disruptions there, too.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security said in a bulletin to local and state law enforcement agencies that it has received reports that truckers are planning to "potentially block roads in major metropolitan cities" in a protest against vaccine mandates and other issues.

The agency said the convoy could begin in Southern California as early as this weekend, possibly disrupting traffic around the Super Bowl, and reach Washington in March in time for the State of the Union address, according to a copy of Tuesday's bulletin obtained by The Associated Press.

The White House said the department is "surging additional staff" to the Super Bowl just in case.

The ban on road blockades in Europe and the threat of prison and heavy fines were likewise prompted by online chatter from groups calling on drivers to converge on Paris and Brussels over the next few days.

The Ambassador Bridge is the busiest U.S.-Canadian border crossing, carrying 25% of all trade between the two countries, and the effects of the blockade there were felt rapidly.

Ford said its Windsor engine plant reopened Thursday after being shut down on Wednesday because of a lack of parts. But the factory and the company's assembly plant in Oakville, Ontario, near Toronto, were operating at reduced capacity, the automaker said.

On the U.S. side, GM sent the first shift home two hours early Thursday at its Flint, Michigan, heavy-duty pickup truck plant due to parts shortages.

Stellantis cut short the first shift Thursday at its Jeep plant in Toledo, Ohio, because of parts shortages. The plant was running normally on Friday.

Also, Honda planned to stop production on one assembly line during the day shift Friday at its plant in Alliston, Ontario.

Toyota said three of its plants in Ontario closed for the rest of the week because of parts shortages, and production also had to be curtailed in Georgetown, Kentucky.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer urged Canadian authorities to quickly resolve the standoff, saying: "It's hitting paychecks and production lines. That is unacceptable."

Hundreds of demonstrators in trucks have also paralyzed the streets of downtown Ottawa for almost two weeks now, and have now closed three border crossings: at Windsor; at Coutts, Alberta, opposite Montana; and at Emerson, Manitoba, across from North Dakota.

The protesters are decrying vaccine mandates for truckers and other COVID-19 restrictions and are railing against Trudeau, even though many of Canada's precautions, such as mask rules and vaccine passports for getting into restaurants, theaters and other places, were enacted by provincial authorities, not the federal government, and are already rapidly being lifted as the omicron surge levels off.

Trudeau continued to stand firm against lifting vaccine mandates, including a requirement that all truck drivers entering the country be fully vaccinated. But because an estimated 90% of the nation's truckers are already inoculated, some conservatives have called on the prime minister to drop the mandate.

The convoy has been promoted and cheered on by many Fox News personalities and attracted support from the likes of former President Donald Trump and Texas Sen. Ted Cruz.

The Associated Press identified more than a dozen Facebook groups encompassing roughly a half-million members that are being used to drum up support for the Canadian protests or plan similar ones in the U.S. and Europe.

To get around the blockade and into Canada, truckers in the Detroit area have had to drive 70 miles north to Port Huron, Michigan, and cross the Blue Water Bridge, where there was a two-hour delay leaving the U.S.

The blockade is happening at a bad time for the U.S. auto industry. Supplies of new vehicles already are low across the nation because of the global shortage of computer chips, which has forced automakers to temporarily close factories.

"The disruptions we are seeing at the U.S.-Canada border — at the Detroit-Windsor Ambassador Bridge and at other crossings — are adding to the significant supply chain strains on manufacturers and other businesses in the United States," the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Association of Manufacturers and Business Roundtable said in a joint statement.

"We respectfully urge the Canadian government to act swiftly to address the disruption to the flow of trade and its impact on manufacturers and other businesses on both sides of the border."

G.M. cancels shifts at a Michigan plant as protests spread disruption.

New York Times, Ana Swanson and Jack Ewing, 10 February 2022

General Motors is the latest automaker to suspend production because of protests at a crucial Canadian border crossing that have disrupted supply chains already in turmoil because of the pandemic.

G.M. said it had canceled two shifts on Wednesday and Thursday at a factory in Lansing, Mich., that makes sport utility vehicles. The plant depends on components that normally travel across a bridge between Windsor, Ontario, and Detroit that was closed by truck drivers and far-right groups angry about vaccine mandates and demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Ford Motor and Toyota have also shut down some operations because factories could not get parts manufactured in Canada.

The shutdown at the border will prevent manufacturing at Toyota's three Canadian plants for the rest of this week, Scott Vazin, a spokesman for Toyota Motor North America, said Thursday.

As long as the shutdowns are short lived, the impact on automaker sales and worker livelihoods should be limited. Companies are likely to make up for any lost production by running extra shifts or other measures.

"A couple of days shouldn't be that significant," Mr. Vazin said. "We're certainly hoping the blockade ends."

Said Deep, a spokesman at Ford, said Thursday morning that the company was running its plants in Oakville and Windsor, both in Ontario, at reduced capacity.

"This interruption on the Detroit-Windsor bridge hurts customers, autoworkers, suppliers, communities and companies on both sides of the border that are already two years into parts shortages resulting from the global semiconductor issue, Covid and more," Mr. Deep said. "We hope this situation is resolved quickly because it could have widespread impact on all automakers in the U.S. and Canada."

John Bordignon, a spokesman for Honda Canada, said on Thursday that the company's plant in Alliston, Ontario, would suspend one production line during the day shift on Friday.

"As this remains a fluid situation, we are monitoring the disruption of transportation between Canada and the U.S. and will adjust production as necessary," Mr. Bordignon said.

Protesters challenging Canada's vaccine requirements and other pandemic restrictions began cutting off traffic Monday on the Ambassador Bridge, the vital span that connects Detroit and Windsor.

The bridge accounts for roughly a quarter of the trade between the United States and Canada. Trucks carry an estimated \$300 million worth of goods across the bridge each day, about a third of which are related to the automobile industry.

Companies have begun rerouting shipments to alternative crossing routes, like the Blue Water Bridge, which links Port Huron, Mich., and Sarnia, Ontario. But a new blockade on Wednesday on a route to that bridge, as well as a surge of diverted cars and trucks, slowed traffic there.

The closings are likely to lead to losses for other industries, as well. On Wednesday, Jen Psaki, the White House press secretary, said that the Biden administration was tracking potential disruptions to agricultural exports to Canada.

Gretchen Whitmer, the governor of Michigan, said in a statement on Thursday that the blockade was putting the state's economy at risk.

"The blockade is having a significant impact on Michigan's working families who are just trying to do their jobs," she said. "Our communities and automotive, manufacturing, and agriculture businesses are feeling the effects."

Carmakers worldwide have struggled with shortages of semiconductors and other parts that severely curtailed production and sales. They had hoped that the flow of components and materials would start to return to normal this year.

Ford said last Friday that it would be forced to shut down some production lines and reduce work hours at plants across North America this week because of chip shortages.

Most carmakers operate on a “just-in-time” system that dispatches parts and materials to their factories as they are needed. The system has helped manufacturers reduce costs.

But it has also left companies vulnerable as the pandemic closed foreign ports and factories and overloaded shipping companies, warehouses and truckers.

David C. Adams, the president at Global Automakers of Canada, which represents Toyota and Honda, said auto facilities typically had about two days of inventory on hand. “Then things start to become problematic in terms of having enough parts to keep the lines running.”

U.S., Canada scramble for levers to end the Ambassador Bridge blockade

Politico, Tanya Snyder, 10 February 2022

Governments on both sides of the Canadian border are mobilizing to figure out how to end the bridge blockade that has snarled travel and freight movement between Detroit and Windsor, Ontario.

From the White House to the mayor of Windsor, public officials are working the courts, activating law enforcement, searching for alternate routes for travelers and truckers and girding for possible confrontations as they seek to bring an end to demonstrations that started two weeks ago. Though the protests started with truck drivers angry about Covid vaccine mandates, they have since morphed into a parade of grievances about government mandates.

The White House on Thursday detailed its strategy, including DOT, DHS, the National Security Council and the National Economic Council working with each other and their Canadian counterparts “to rapidly develop a set of options that match current industry demands — including alternative routes and other scenario planning.”

In addition, two members of President Joe Biden’s Cabinet on Thursday contacted their Canadian counterparts to encourage them to bring their powers to bear to end the blockade of the Ambassador Bridge, a vital lifeline for commerce between the two countries.

DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg reached out “urging them to use federal powers to resolve this situation at our joint border and offering the full support of our Homeland Security and Transportation departments,” the White House said.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also blasted the blockade as “unacceptable” during an appearance Thursday in Ottawa. “They are impacting on regular Canadians — whether it’s grocery store prices, whether it’s jobs lost and suspended, whether it’s supply chains disrupted,” Trudeau said. “This is hurting communities across the country.”

The Biden administration said it is also “in close touch” with U.S. auto companies, shippers, business and agricultural groups and labor unions.

The administration also sought to quell anxieties about a similar convoy potentially heading to Washington, D.C., in the coming weeks, saying DHS is “aware of these reports and is taking all necessary steps” to ensure that any such protest would not interfere with trade, transportation, government and law enforcement functions.

“At this time, we have no indication that individuals involved are engaged in anything other than First Amendment-protected activity,” the administration said.

Windsor Mayor Drew Dilkens indicated an all-hands approach against the blockade on the Canadian side too Thursday, noting that the city had asked for provincial and federal police support and that provincial police “responded immediately” and were on the ground with “more coming.”

The city of Windsor is seeking a court injunction, which Dilkens said he expects will come before a judge on Thursday, to remove demonstrators blocking access to the bridge. Dilkens said the city would “make sure we have the right number of people here to be able to enforce the injunction.”

He said the fact that the convoy is “very much a leaderless movement” complicates attempts to negotiate because “there are multiple parties who believe that they represent the group when in fact, no one really represents this group.”

“The police will always try and negotiate a solution here,” Dilkens said, but he warned, “If we can’t gain compliance voluntarily, then other measures will have to be taken.”

“Everyone wants to know, ‘When are you going to move in,’” he said. “And we hope not to have to move in. We hope we can get the protesters to see the light of day and recognize that the easiest way out of this is for them to voluntarily get in their cars and drive away.”

While the road leading to the Ambassador Bridge is a municipal road, Dilkens justified the use of federal and provincial law enforcement by stressing that it was hardly “a run-of-the-mill municipal road.”

He also said Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has “offered to send over heavy equipment to help remove vehicles, to provide security” and “whatever is required” to end the blockade.

Earlier Thursday, Whitmer issued a statement calling on Canadian authorities at all levels to “de-escalate this economic blockade.”

The Ambassador Bridge between Windsor and Detroit is still closed and Customs and Border Protection is re-routing traffic to Port Huron, an hour north, where all nine commercial lanes, including a FAST lane, are open, the White House said. The Detroit-Windsor tunnel is also open to passenger vehicle traffic.

Canadian trucker protests start to hurt auto plants nationwide

NBC News, Paul A. Eisenstein, 11 February 2022

Like falling dominoes, automakers across North America are adding to the list of plants affected by the truck blockade that has all but halted traffic across two of the busiest routes linking the U.S. and Canada.

After temporarily halting production at three of its factories in Ontario, Toyota announced Thursday that a shortage of Canadian-made parts had hit an assembly plant in Kentucky. Ford and General Motors have felt the impact at some of their operations. And though the automaker Stellantis has resumed operations at an assembly plant in Windsor, Mike Koval, the CEO of its Ram brand, said in an interview that “the situation is fluid” and could lead to new production cuts.

“It is a mess,” said Carla Bailo, the CEO of the Center for Automotive Research, or CAR, a nonprofit research group. “What we’re seeing is that the plants in Canada are really getting strangled first. Then the plants in the U.S. relying on engines and transmissions will be hurt next.”

Ongoing problems

Claiming to be mobilized by frustration with Canadian mask and vaccine mandates, thousands of truckers descended on the capital, Ottawa, last month and staged a protest that has all but paralyzed the city. Early this week, they expanded their demonstrations, first moving to blockade the Ambassador Bridge connecting Windsor, Ontario, with Detroit.

The bridge is the busiest land crossing between the U.S. and Canada and handles nearly 25 percent of the trade between the two countries. It is the primary route for auto parts and completed vehicles, especially those produced in the Ontario and Michigan manufacturing centers.

Canadian authorities responded by redirecting traffic to two other regional border crossings. The tunnel between Windsor and Detroit can only handle light vehicles, however. So trucks were diverted to the Blue Water Bridge linking Sarnia, on the Canadian side, with Port Huron, Michigan. But protestors quickly moved to tie up that link on the Canadian side, as well.

While some traffic has been able to move across the spans, traffic has been operating in one direction and at a crawl, trucks taking more than four hours to move from Sarnia to Port Huron. And what little traffic that has been able to cross the two bridges has been going from the Canadian to the U.S. side.

Among the plants so far hit by the blockade, the impact has been most severe on the Canadian side:

- Stellantis — formed by the merger of Fiat Chrysler and PSA Group last year — briefly shut down the Chrysler Pacifica minivan plant in Windsor. But it has now been brought back up.
- Ford soon followed, paring back production at a key SUV assembly line in Oakville, Ontario, and an engine plant in Windsor.
- Toyota followed by closing three Ontario plants “for the remainder of this week and then it is TBD,” chief spokesman Scott Vazin said in an interview. Those plants in Cambridge and Woodstock, Ontario, produce the conventional and hybrid versions of the RAV4 SUV, the best-selling Toyota model line, as well as the top Lexus product, the RX SUV.

Spreading chaos

On Thursday, Toyota said in a statement that its assembly plant in Kentucky had “recently been impacted by issues related to the Ambassador Bridge blockade. We expect disruptions through the weekend, and we’ll continue to make adjustments as needed.”

Shortages have already forced production cuts at the General Motors plant in Lansing, Michigan. And there is growing concern that the slowdown in production at the Ford engine plant in Windsor might soon be felt in Kentucky and Ohio. Plants in those states assemble the high-profit Ford SuperDuty pickups, which use the engines produced in Windsor.

“There is no question it is having a negative impact and it will only get worse the longer it lasts,” said Matt Blunt, president of the American Automotive Policy Council and a former governor of Missouri. The blockade is “affecting production ... clearly a situation that needs to be resolved. We appreciate the fact that the U.S. government is doing all it can to facilitate as much commerce as possible, but we need Canadian officials to address upheaval and get bridges and transit routes back open.”

Separately, White House spokesperson Jennifer Psaki said that President Joe Biden “is focused on this and we are working very closely” with the U.S. Homeland Security Department and the Canadian government to find ways to end the blockade or work around it.

Pandemic problems

All told, the two bridges linking Michigan and Ontario carry about \$100 billion in automotive goods annually.

So a disruption in traffic is a problem at any time. But it’s particularly worrisome now, having had to cope for two years with Covid-fueled production cuts and the slowdowns caused by an ongoing shortage of semiconductors.

Auto buyers, as well as automakers, have felt the heat. There currently are only about 1 million vehicles in U.S. dealer lots, reported J.D. Power, down from the more than 3 million considered normal for this time of year. So, not only are shoppers finding it hard to locate the new vehicles they want, but they are facing a surge in new vehicle prices. According to J.D. Power and other tracking services, the average transaction price for a new vehicle jumped to as much as \$47,000 at the end of 2021, up more than \$10,000 since the beginning of the pandemic.

There are only a handful of vehicles at Suburban Ford of Ferndale, a suburb at the northern border of Detroit, said sales manager Brycen Collins. And he now is worried that his inventory could shrink further due to the blockade.

"Everything I heard is that we have a couple more days before it starts hurting us," Collins said. Ironically, the speed at which the blockade crisis has hit is, in part, the industry's own fault. Over the last few decades, automakers have moved to a "lean" manufacturing system called just-in-time production. They maintain minimal levels of inventory and, when possible, take delivery of parts and components shortly before they're needed on the assembly line. That leaves little room for error.

"We saw this during the pandemic as well," said Bailo, when manpower shortages at parts plants forced some assembly plants to trim or halt production. "There are going to be changes" going forward, she added. In some cases, manufacturers may need to start building warehouse inventories again. And they will be more likely to seek out dual sources of parts. If one supplier goes down, they'll turn to the other to fill the gap.

The Ottawa trucker protest is rooted in extremism, a national security expert says

NPR, Nell Clark, 10 February 2022

Massive protests by truckers opposing pandemic precautions continue to ensnare traffic in Canada. Authorities are increasingly wary of the extremist views on display during the demonstrations, which some have dubbed the "Freedom Convoy."

The drivers have been blocking major metropolitan areas in Ottawa, Ontario, for over a week and are becoming increasingly raucous, calling for the lifting of health regulations as well as a regime change in the country. Protestors in tractor-trailers and other vehicles have been running their engines and honking their horns day and night in the densely populated area. There are also hundreds of protestors on foot.

Ottawa City Councilor Matthew Luloff told Morning Edition that hate symbols and acutely anti-Semitic writing have been seen at the rallies. Along with Canadian flags, some protestors have also been showing off U.S. Confederate flags and swastikas.

"Some of the most well-known radicals in this country have now descended upon the capital. Some of them are calling for violence. Some of them are threatening individual politicians," said Luloff.

Some of the protestors have legitimate concerns, noted Luloff. But what's driving those using the protests to push hate?

In fact, extremist groups are at the core of the movement, Stephanie Carvin, a national security expert, tells Morning Edition. Carvin reports groups with conspiratorial beliefs, anti-government and bigoted views have been trying for years to organize a convoy, but vaccine mandates helped to finally give their plan enough momentum in Ottawa.

"In reality, I think what we're looking at is something like a spark that lit a powder keg within the wider Canadian population," Carvin says.

Carvin notes fatigue for mitigation measures is at an all-time high as many places in Canada come out of a fourth round of major lockdowns for COVID-19 prevention, unlike many other countries — including the U.S. — which have not had consistent lockdowns.

Those fatigued with lockdown-induced economic and social struggles resonate with the trucker protest's messages against COVID-19 mandates, even though at its core, the movement's roots are firmly based in violent extremist ideologies, Carvin explains.

When NPR's Emma Jacobs visited the protests in Ottawa and interviewed demonstrators, a man who's part of the self-appointed security for the protests' areas pushed his way into the interview.

"It's a civil war between the government and its people," he explained. He didn't give his name.

From a security perspective, Carvin reports authorities don't want to take responsibility for the protests. Law enforcement has been confiscating protesters' fuel and calling for additional police forces.

"There's a reluctance to even just hand out parking tickets. It is a baffling kind of collapse of authority," says Carvin.

Even as Canada lifts coronavirus mandates in some areas, the protests may not end due to their anti-governmental nature.

If the protests spread across the United States, authorities worry they could further crumble supply chains and potentially disrupt the upcoming Super Bowl and State of the Union address.

From: Lambo, Pam -WSHDC -WS -PA

Sent: February 10, 2022 2:45 PM

To: Loken, Martin -WSHDC -GR <Martin.Loken@international.gc.ca>; McIntyre, Graeme -WSHDC -GR <Graeme.McIntyre@international.gc.ca>; Holmes, Michael -WSHDC -GR <Michael.Holmes@international.gc.ca>; Maisonneuve, Mélanie -WSHDC -BF <Melanie.Maisonneuve@international.gc.ca>; Kiameh, Madeleine -WSHDC -BF <Madeleine.Kiameh@international.gc.ca>; Fanning, Tammy -WSHDC -BF <Tammy.Fanning@international.gc.ca>; Stendardo, Frank -WSHDC -TD <Frank.Stendardo@international.gc.ca>; 'Arseneau, Michel' <michel.arseneau@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; 'McGraw, Mathews' <mathews.mcgraw@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; Gordon, Sean -WSHDC -PL <Sean.Gordon@international.gc.ca>

Cc: Baird, Katherine -WSHDC -DHOM/CDMA <Katherine.Baird@international.gc.ca>; Grant, Heather -WSHDC -WS <Heather.Grant@international.gc.ca>; Bélanger, Jérôme -WSHDC -GR <Jerome.Belanger@international.gc.ca>; *WSHDC-Media Relations <D-WSHDC-MediaRelations@international.gc.ca>; Parsons, Alanna -NGB <Alanna.Parsons@international.gc.ca>; Barratt, Adam -WSHDC -WS <Adam.Barratt@international.gc.ca>; Boudreau, Wendy -WSHDC -WS <Wendy.Boudreau@international.gc.ca>; Maron, Stefano -WSHDC -WS <Stefano.Maron@international.gc.ca>; Fisher, Dani -MNPLS -GR <dani.fisher@international.gc.ca>; Connell, Christine -DTROT -GR <Christine.Connell@international.gc.ca>; Denter, Christian -NGB <Christian.Denter@international.gc.ca>

Subject: 2022-02-10: U.S. media roll-up: "Freedom Convoy" Protest

See full media articles below (and attached).

Also attached: Twitter snapshot (including members of Congress) and Transcript of CTV's Evan Solomon interview with former U.S. Ambassador Bruce Heyman and others

Media calls received: 5 (4 US, 1 Canadian). Consulting with HQ.

Media summary: The truckers protest is now receiving extensive coverage in mainstream US media, both national and regional. You would be hard pressed to find a US news outlet (print or television) not reporting on the protest in Canada. Even commentators on FOX News have polarizing views – Geraldo Rivera called the truckers “selfish” and their behavior “thuggish” while other talking heads on FOX applauded the truckers, calling them the “blue collar” essential workers standing up for their freedoms. Faith based outlets including the Christian Broadcasting Network are interviewing truckers in Ottawa with talk of “God-given rights” at this “peaceful” protest – and how plans are taking shape among US truckers to convoy from California to Washington, DC. Beyond the debate over vaccine mandates and civil liberties, coverage also highlights disruptions to supply chains and broader economic impacts citing statements by the increasing number of binational industry and US government (State and Federal) voices.

Entering its third week, the protesters’ confidence is gaining and local television crews are there to capture its impacts. With blockades at Michigan’s Ambassador Bridge and at the Port of Entry in Pembina, North Dakota, regional media are connecting the dots on how local businesses that rely on supply chains are having to lay off workers. A significant number of outlets have picked up on comments by US law enforcement officials that copycat protests encouraged by the truckers’ “success” in Canada could disrupt this weekend’s Super Bowl. Niche trucker publications are reporting out of places like Little Rock, Arkansas talking about “Convoy to DC 2022” with a growing Facebook following from groups who “believe in our founding fathers”.

Companies who depend on the border are contacting their Governors and members of Congress – and taking to twitter and issuing news releases. The Governor of Michigan issued a statement: *Governor Whitmer Calls on Canada to Reopen Traffic on Ambassador Bridge*. Congressional Democrats (see attached) are adding their voice to the situation, while other members of Congress are now calling for an investigation in to GoFundMe.

Articles out of DC-centric outlets quote DHS warning police about trucker protests at the March 1 State of the Union too. POLITICO headlines this week include, *“Trudeau’s own party is starting to turn on him over COVID restrictions”*. Commentary pieces abound -- in today’s Washington Post, *“The American right uses truckers to import right-wing fury into Canada”* and in The Hill, *“Canadian truckers’ convoy: American spinoff or domestic cascade?”*

Local public reaction: WSHDC-managed Consular Contact Centre is reporting an increased number of emails and phone calls from members of the public across the US expressing views on the protest. It appears there is a coordinated message campaign using a generic template that expresses support for the protest and criticizes the Canadian government for “human rights violations being carried out against lawful and peaceful protestors by federal, provincial and municipal officials in Ottawa and elsewhere.” No media pick-up of this campaign so far.

Abbreviated Articles

White House worried about Ambassador Bridge blockade disrupting auto production

The Detroit News, Melissa Nann Burke and Riley Beggin, 9 February 2022

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Automakers cut production as Canadian truckers block deliveries across key border bridge to protest vaccine mandate

CNBC News, Michael Wayland, 10 February 2022

Canadian truck drivers blocking the nation's busiest border bridge between the U.S. and Canada in protest of that country's Covid-19 vaccine mandate are now disrupting North American manufacturing, especially among automakers.

Key U.S.-Canada border crossing blocked by truckers as Covid protest spreads

NBC News, Chantal Da Silva, 9 February

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Truck blockade at US-Canadian border shuts auto plants

Associated Press, Rob Gillies, 10 February 2022

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DHS bulletin warns trucker convoy could disrupt Super Bowl Sunday

CNN, Geneva Sands, 9 February 2022

The Department of Homeland Security is warning law enforcement across the country that a convoy of truckers protesting Covid-19 vaccine mandates, similar to recent protests in Ottawa, Canada, could soon begin in the US -- with the potential to affect Sunday's Super Bowl in the Los Angeles area and cause other disruptions.

Full Articles

White House worried about Ambassador Bridge blockade disrupting auto production

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More: What to know about the traffic delays at Ambassador Bridge, trucker protest over COVID mandate

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said the administration is coordinating with and in close touch with Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, auto companies, Customs and Border Protection officials, as well as Canadian counterparts to monitor the situation.

"The Ambassador Bridge is Canada's busiest link to the United States and accounts for about 25% of trade between the two countries," Psaki said, "and so the blockade poses a risk to supply chains for the auto industry because the bridge is a key conduit for motor vehicles components and parts."

Protests in Canada have prompted closures at the Ambassador Bridge since Monday, causing headaches for commercial drivers and traffic on Michigan roadways. As of Wednesday afternoon, the border was open to U.S.-bound traffic but closed to Canadian-bound travel.

The city of Windsor said about 100 people are protesting at the bridge Wednesday. In Ottawa, demonstrations staged by the Freedom Truck Convoy have shut down parts of the capital city for more than 10 days, with protesters demanding vaccine mandates and COVID-19 restrictions be lifted.

White House homeland security adviser Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall convened a meeting about the Ambassador Bridge's blockade on Wednesday, Psaki said.

"The President is focused on this and we are working very closely with the team at DHS, with Canadian officials and others to do everything we can to alleviate the impact," Psaki said.

White House officials are communicating with automakers about what auto parts coming from Canada could be delayed due to the disruption at the border crossing. They are also tracking potential disruptions to U.S. agricultural exports from Michigan into Canada, Psaki said.

She noted that Customs and Border officials have worked with Canadian counterparts to re-route traffic from the Ambassador Bridge to the Blue Water Bridge.

"There's still a lengthy delay, but it is enabling some of these trucks and transports to get through," Psaki said. "We're working to ensure there's movement."

She noted they opened all nine commercial lanes including a fast lane at the bridge to process diverted traffic.

But protests had been threatened for Wednesday in Sarnia on the Canadian side of the bridge, according to media reports.

"We support peaceful protest, but we have concerns when those protests turn violent," Psaki said.

"And certainly I think it's important for everyone in Canada and the United States to understand what the potential impact of this blockage is on workers, on the supply chain and that is where we are most focused."

John Walsh, president and CEO of the Michigan Manufacturers Association, told The Detroit News his organization is fielding questions and concerns from its members and lobbying elected officials for a resolution.

"As an association, we've been in contact with our senators, as well as with the governor," he said. "She's been working hard with the Biden administration to convey the importance of getting this resolved and hopefully bringing some pressure on the Canadian government."

If a resolution is not reached quickly, Walsh is worried factory shutdowns and temporary layoffs could begin within the next few days because of the manufacturing industry's reliance on a just-in-time supply model.

Several lawmakers on Capitol Hill said they were monitoring the protests and reaching out to U.S. Homeland Security officials Wednesday.

The onus is on Canada to determine a solution to the strain because the protests are challenging a Canadian policy, said Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Lansing, even as the supply chain disruptions impact Michigan and the U.S. as a whole.

Whitmer and the Canadian government are working on easing the strain, she added, including having some of the nurses working in hospitals on either side of the border stay overnight rather than commute.

"It's a complicated situation. ... It's hospital personnel, it's auto supply chain, it's many things," she said. "But ultimately, the Canadian government has to decide how they're going to respond."

Rep. Andy Levin, D-Bloomfield Township, said the situation presents a "very, very serious" potential impediment to what's already a delicate supply chain.

"I trust that the Canadian authorities will not treat this as simply a local police matter of Windsor, Ontario or Ottawa," Levin said.

"These are obviously protests about national policy, and we need to find a way to afford people — truckers and everybody else — the right to protest without undermining the economy, causing more supply chain problems, or adding to inflationary pressures."

Sen. Gary Peters, D-Bloomfield Township, said his office is looking into ways to alleviate the congestion, including working with the Canadian government.

"We're clearly very worried about the backup because trade is just so integral to our economy and the Canadian economy," Peters said.

He declined to weigh in on the vaccine mandate that the truckers are protesting.

"I would hope the Canadian government could work it out as quickly as possible," Peters said.

Rep. Elissa Slotkin, D-Holly, noted the conversations happening between the Canadians and the White House and with U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

"They found a way to effectively protest. I would not be shocked if we saw those kinds of protests in the United States because they have been so effective," Slotkin said.

"But the truth is there is cargo that needs to get through, and so I'm not sure what we can do to get some sort of agreement to allow traffic to go back. But I'm hoping that the Canadian government informs us quickly that they've said 'uncle' and they're going to do something to get us back to full health."

A "silver lining" of the situation, she added, is that more people are realizing that Michigan is where one-fourth of U.S.-Canadian road trade crosses and "recognizing what Michigan is to our economy."

Automakers cut production as Canadian truckers block deliveries across key border bridge to protest vaccine mandate

CNBC News, Michael Wayland, 10 February 2022

Canadian truck drivers blocking the nation's busiest border bridge between the U.S. and Canada in protest of that country's Covid-19 vaccine mandate are now disrupting North American manufacturing, especially among automakers.

The White House on Wednesday said it was monitoring the problem "very closely." Government officials have warned if the so-called Freedom Convoy blockade is prolonged, it could worsen supply chain problems, not just for the automotive industry but also for the medical and agriculture sectors among others.

The blockade is entering its fourth day on the Ambassador Bridge, which links Detroit, Mich., and Windsor, Ontario. The route accounts for a quarter of goods traded between the U.S. and Canada.

"The blockade poses a risk to supply chains for the auto industry because the bridge is a key conduit for motor vehicles components and parts," White House press secretary Jen Psaki told reporters at a briefing Wednesday. "We're also tracking potential disruptions to U.S. agricultural exports from Michigan into Canada."

Psaki said the White House is in close contact with Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, U.S. Customs and Border Protection authorities, as well as Canadian officials and auto companies. They are

attempting to find alternative cross-border routes and alleviate the impact on U.S. production and motorists who use the bridge to get to work.

"We're very focused on this. The president is focused on this," Psaki said.

Auto production

The blockade exacerbates an already tumultuous time for auto production, as companies continue to grapple with a prolonged semiconductor chip shortage that has caused sporadic closures of plants over the past year.

GM spokesman Dan Flores on Thursday confirmed the first shift at its Lansing Delta Township assembly plant in Michigan would be cut due to the problem. A second shift was cut Wednesday, he said.

Ford is running an engine plant in Windsor and an assembly plant in Oakville, Ontario, on a reduced schedule, spokeswoman Kelli Felker said Thursday morning. It follows similar actions by the company Wednesday due to the problem, including a shutdown of the engine facility,

"This interruption on the Detroit-Windsor bridge hurts customers, autoworkers, suppliers, communities and companies on both sides of the border," Ford said in a statement. "We hope this situation is resolved quickly, because it could have widespread impact on all automakers in the U.S. and Canada."

Ford had already made significant cuts to production this week at several North American plants due to the chips shortage.

Toyota on Wednesday said it would not be able to manufacture anything at three Canadian plants for the rest of this week due to parts shortages, the Associated Press reported. A statement attributed the problem to supply chain, weather and pandemic-related challenges, but the shutdowns came just days after the blockade began Monday.

Stellantis, formerly Fiat Chrysler, cut shifts short Wednesday at its minivan plant in Windsor, according to local media reports. The company did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Canadian protests

The blockade on the large international suspension bridge is one of a growing number of protests in Canada by the trucking industry.

Protesters have also been blocking the border crossing at Coutts, Alberta, for a week and a half, and more than 400 trucks have been in downtown Ottawa, Canada's capital, in a protest that began late last month, according to the Associated Press.

Truckers are protesting a rule that took effect Jan. 15 requiring those entering Canada to be fully vaccinated. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has shown no sign of easing the country's restrictions, according to media reports.

François Laporte, president of Teamsters Canada, which represents over 55,000 professional drivers, including 15,000 long-haul truck drivers, has condemned the protests, saying they do not represent the 90% of drivers who are vaccinated.

"We firmly believe in the right to protest government policies and voice a wide array of opinions, but what is happening in Ottawa has done more harm to Teamsters members, be they truck drivers who were trying to deliver their loads, or hotel, restaurant and health-care workers who were intimidated, abused or prevented from accessing their workplaces, by several protesters," he said in a statement earlier this week.

Key U.S.-Canada border crossing blocked by truckers as Covid protest spreads

NBC News, Chantal Da Silva, 9 February

The busiest border crossing between Canada and the United States was still partially blocked Wednesday as a major protest against Covid-19 rules spread beyond Ottawa, the Canadian capital, where it has caused havoc for nearly two weeks.

Dubbed the "Freedom Convoy," the demonstration has brought chaos to Ottawa since late last month. But this week, as Canadian officials expressed growing dismay at the disruption, it threatened to spread well beyond the country's borders.

The prospect of an economic impact in the United States came after the truckers won support from Republican politicians, including former President Donald Trump, and as similar convoys protesting coronavirus regulations emerged in Europe and elsewhere.

Aerial footage showed Ambassador Bridge, which connects Detroit and Windsor and carries around 27 percent of all trade between the U.S. and Canada, congested with trucks backed up along the crossing Tuesday. It is unclear how many of those trucks were participating in the demonstration and how many had simply been blocked from moving forward.

Police had asked drivers to avoid the area, which has seen traffic clogged by protesters since Monday. U.S.-bound lanes reopened Tuesday, but as of early Wednesday morning lanes going into Canada remained partially closed, according to the Canada Border Services Agency's website.

Canadian officials have warned of the potential for economic fallout, with Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino calling the bridge "one of the most important border crossings in the world."

On Tuesday, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said in a news briefing it was "clear these disruptions have broadened in scope beyond the vaccine requirement implementation."

"We are, of course, in touch with our Canadian counterparts" on the blockade, she said.

The blockade is the latest development in a saga that has seen hundreds of truckers converge on Canada's capital, blocking city streets, blaring their horns and disrupting daily life in the Canadian capital.

The Ottawa Police Service announced Tuesday that at least 23 people had been arrested in connection with "unlawful demonstrations" related to the trucker protest. They said a total of at least 85 investigations had been opened into the demonstration, including alleged hate crimes, property damage and theft.

Police have also issued tickets and sought to cut off truckers' access to fuel as part of a crackdown to end the protest.

The demonstration initially began in opposition to vaccination mandates for truckers crossing the U.S.-Canada border, but its focus quickly shifted to broader issues with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberal government and coronavirus measures imposed across the country.

Pandemic restrictions enforced in parts of Canada have been far stricter than in the U.S., but Canadians have largely backed the measures. Some provinces, including Saskatchewan, Quebec and Alberta, are moving to lift Covid measures.

Trudeau has denounced protesters' tactics, saying the chaos "has to stop" during an emergency debate in Parliament on Monday night.

Mendicino, the public safety minister, said: "Most Canadians understand there is a difference between being tired and fatigued with the pandemic and crossing into some other universe."

In recent days the protest movement appears to have spread well beyond Canada's borders.

In New Zealand, scores of people protesting vaccine and mask mandates joined a convoy to the capital, Wellington, on Tuesday. A number of demonstrators could also be seen carrying "Trump 2024" flags.

The country has imposed strict restrictions during the course of the pandemic, reporting just 53 deaths from the virus among its population of around 5 million.

As some grow weary of the restrictions, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has said the country will end its quarantine requirements for travelers entering the country as it reopens its borders.

In France, a convoy appeared to be making its way from Nice toward Paris to protest coronavirus rules.

Some members of the convoy were also expected to join a protest in Brussels, where organizers have said on social media they expect convoys from across Europe to gather for what they have billed as a major demonstration.

Truck blockade at US-Canadian border shuts auto plants

Associated Press, Rob Gillies, 10 February 2022

The truck blockade by Canadians protesting the country's COVID-19 restrictions is tightening the screws on the auto industry, forcing Ford, General Motors and other car companies to shut down plants or otherwise reduce production on both sides of the U.S. border.

The bumper-to-bumper demonstration by the self-proclaimed Freedom Truck Convoy entered its fourth day Thursday at the Ambassador Bridge connecting Windsor, Ontario, to Detroit, disrupting the flow of auto parts and other products between the two countries.

Meanwhile, U.S. authorities braced for the possibility of similar truck-convoy protests across the United States, and authorities in Paris and Belgium banned road blockades to head off disruptions there too.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security said in a bulletin to local and state law enforcement agencies that it has received reports that truckers are planning to "potentially block roads in major metropolitan cities" in a protest against vaccine mandates and other issues.

DHS said the convoy could begin in Southern California as early as this weekend, possibly disrupting traffic around the Super Bowl, and reach Washington in March in time for the State of the Union, according to a copy of Tuesday's bulletin obtained by The Associated Press. It said that the protest could be disruptive and tie up traffic but that there have been no calls for violence.

The ban on road blockades in Europe and the threat of prison and heavy fines were likewise prompted by online chat groups in France that have been calling on drivers to converge on Paris starting Friday night and to continue on to Brussels on Monday.

The Ambassador Bridge is the busiest U.S.-Canadian border crossing, carrying 25% of all trade between the two countries, and the effects of the blockade there were felt rapidly.

NATHAN DENETTE, THE CANADIAN PRESS VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

Firefighters put out a burning barrel fire as truckers and supporters blocked access from the Ambassador Bridge, linking Detroit and Windsor, in a protest against COVID-19 vaccine mandates and restrictions in Windsor, Ontario, on Wednesday, Feb. 9, 2022.

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TORONTO — The truck blockade by Canadians protesting the country's COVID-19 restrictions is tightening the screws on the auto industry, forcing Ford, General Motors and other car companies to shut down plants or otherwise reduce production on both sides of the U.S. border.

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On the U.S. side, GM canceled the second shift on Wednesday and the first shift on Thursday at its SUV factory outside Lansing, Michigan.

Toyota said it will not be able to manufacture anything at three Canadian plants for the rest of the week because of parts shortages. In a statement, the automaker blamed supply chain disruptions, weather and pandemic-related problems, but the shutdowns came just days after the blockade began Monday.

Honda said that its assembly plant in Alliston, Ontario, north of Toronto, had to suspend production on one assembly line on Wednesday, but that it was back in operation Thursday.

Stellantis, formerly Fiat Chrysler, said all of its North American factories were running Thursday, but shortages because of the blockade forced it to shorten shifts at several plants.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer urged Canadian authorities to quickly resolve the standoff.

"My message is simple: reopen traffic on the bridge," she said in a statement. "The blockade is having a significant impact on Michigan's working families who are just trying to do their jobs. Our communities and automotive, manufacturing, and agriculture businesses are feeling the effects. It's hitting paychecks and production lines. That is unacceptable."

Hundreds of demonstrators in trucks have also paralyzed the streets of downtown Ottawa for almost two weeks, and dozens more have been blocking the border crossing at Coutts, Alberta, opposite Montana, decrying vaccine mandates for truckers and other COVID-19 restrictions and railing against Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Protesters also began a new blockade at Emerson, Manitoba, across the border from North Dakota.

The convoy has been promoted and cheered on by many Fox News personalities and attracted support from the likes of former President Donald Trump and Texas Sen. Ted Cruz.

Windsor Mayor Drew Dilkens said Wednesday that police had not removed the protesters there for fear of inflaming the situation. But he added: "We're not going to let this happen for a prolonged period of time."

As of Wednesday, the demonstration involved 50 to 74 vehicles and about 100 protesters, police said. Ottawa police said Thursday they were "able to negotiate for a dozen more trucks to leave" downtown and said 10 others left, but the city warned about traffic disruptions because of a new demonstration at the Ottawa airport. Police also said a deliberate effort to flood its 911 line with calls was underway.

To get around the blockade and into Canada, truckers in the Detroit area have had to drive 70 miles north to Port Huron, Michigan, and cross the Blue Water Bridge, where there was a 4½-hour delay leaving the U.S.

While protesters have been calling for Trudeau's removal, most of the restrictive measures around the country have been put in place by provincial governments. Those include requirements that people show proof-of-vaccination passports to enter restaurants, gyms, movie theaters and sporting events.

Many provinces announced plans this week to remove or relax those restrictions after the surge in omicron cases crested in the country.

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Associated Press, Rob Gillies, 10 February 2022

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Many provinces announced plans this week to remove or relax those restrictions after the surge in omicron cases crested in the country.

Pandemic restrictions have been far stricter in Canada than in the U.S., but Canadians have largely supported them. Canada's COVID-19 death rate is one-third that of the U.S.

Canada's opposition Conservative Party began calling for the blockades to end after its lawmakers initially supported the protests.

"The economy you want to see reopen is hurting. Farmers, manufacturers, small businesses and families are suffering," interim Conservative leader Candice Bergen said in Parliament.

DHS bulletin warns trucker convoy could disrupt Super Bowl Sunday

CNN, Geneva Sands, 9 February 2022

The Department of Homeland Security is warning law enforcement across the country that a convoy of truckers protesting Covid-19 vaccine mandates, similar to recent protests in Ottawa, Canada, could soon begin in the US -- with the potential to affect Sunday's Super Bowl in the Los Angeles area and cause other disruptions.

A DHS bulletin issued on Tuesday to state and local officials, obtained by CNN, said the agency "has received reports of truck drivers planning to potentially block roads in major metropolitan cities in the United States in protest of, among other things, vaccine mandates for truck drivers."

The DHS warning was first reported by Yahoo News.

"The convoy will potentially begin in California as early as mid-February and arrive in Washington, DC, as late as mid-March, potentially impacting the Super Bowl LVI scheduled for 13 February and the State of the Union Address scheduled for 1 March," the bulletin said.

"While there are currently no indications of planned violence, if hundreds of trucks converge in a major metropolitan city, the potential exists to severely disrupt transportation, federal government operations, commercial facilities, and emergency services through gridlock and potential counterprotests," the bulletin continued.

A DHS spokesperson told CNN in a statement that the department "is tracking reports of a potential convoy that may be planning to travel to several U.S. cities. We have not observed specific calls for violence within the United States associated with this convoy, and are working closely with our federal, state, and local partners to continuously assess the threat environment and keep our communities safe."

A federal law enforcement official told CNN that early last week, authorities began seeing calls on a variety of online forums for the events in Ottawa to expand into the US. The official said that law enforcement and security officials guarding the Super Bowl in Inglewood, California, are preparing for any possible disruptions.

For nearly two weeks, Canadian truckers have been protesting a new rule that requires them to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19 or face a two-week quarantine in their homes after they return across the US-Canadian border. Others have joined to rally against mask mandates, lockdowns, restrictions on gatherings and other Covid-19 preventative efforts in the country.

Tensions stemming from protests have simmered to the point that traffic at key US transit points has ground to a stop and a judge has temporarily banned demonstrators in the nation's capital from using horns.

DHS said it has worked for more than a year to support security measures around the Super Bowl and dedicated more than 500 individuals from the department to assist. The agency says it has also worked with federal, state and local partners to strengthen security around the US Capitol.

President Joe Biden is set to deliver the annual State of the Union address to Congress on March 1.

From: Lambo, Pam -WSHDC -WS -PA

Sent: February 9, 2022 5:37 PM

To: Loken, Martin -WSHDC -GR <Martin.Loken@international.gc.ca>; McIntyre, Graeme -WSHDC -GR <Graeme.McIntyre@international.gc.ca>; Holmes, Michael -WSHDC -GR <Michael.Holmes@international.gc.ca>; Maisonneuve, Mélanie -WSHDC -BF <Melanie.Maisonneuve@international.gc.ca>; Kiameh, Madeleine -WSHDC -BF <Madeleine.Kiameh@international.gc.ca>; Fanning, Tammy -WSHDC -BF <Tammy.Fanning@international.gc.ca>; Stendardo, Frank -WSHDC -TD <Frank.Stendardo@international.gc.ca>; 'Arseneau, Michel' <michel.arseneau@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; 'McGraw, Mathews' <mathews.mcgraw@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; Gordon, Sean -WSHDC -PL <Sean.Gordon@international.gc.ca>

Cc: Baird, Katherine -WSHDC -DHOM/CDMA <Katherine.Baird@international.gc.ca>; Grant, Heather -WSHDC -WS <Heather.Grant@international.gc.ca>; Bélanger, Jérôme -WSHDC -GR <Jerome.Belanger@international.gc.ca>; *WSHDC-Media Relations <D-WSHDC-MediaRelations@international.gc.ca>; Parsons, Alanna -NGB <Alanna.Parsons@international.gc.ca>; Barratt, Adam -WSHDC -WS <Adam.Barratt@international.gc.ca>; Boudreau, Wendy -WSHDC -WS <Wendy.Boudreau@international.gc.ca>; Maron, Stefano -WSHDC -WS <Stefano.Maron@international.gc.ca>; Fisher, Dani -MNPLS -GR <dani.fisher@international.gc.ca>; Connell, Christine -DTROT -GR <Christine.Connell@international.gc.ca>; Denter, Christian -NGB <Christian.Denter@international.gc.ca>

Subject: 2022-02-09: U.S. media roll-up: "Freedom Convoy" Protest

ATTACHED UPDATES:

Roll-up of US media articles

Twitter snapshot

Q&A with Jen Psaki at today's WH press briefing

CBSA and RCMP media lines (provided by PCO)

From: Lambo, Pam -WSHDC -WS -PA

Sent: February 9, 2022 10:01 AM

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Subject: RE: U.S. media roll-up: "Freedom Convoy" Protest

Attached is the excerpt on the protest from yesterday's WH press briefing. Note that there are three unique Q&A exchanges, and we believe that the last Q was from TVA's Richard Latendresse.

From: Lambo, Pam -WSHDC -WS -PA
Sent: February 8, 2022 6:33 PM
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Subject: U.S. media roll-up: "Freedom Convoy" Protest

In addition to the attached US media roll-up, note that the protest was raised at today's WH press briefing during which Jen Psaki was asked about the "Canadian trucker protest" that shut down the Ambassador Bridge last night and if the Administration had a plan to prevent blockages on the Michigan side of the bridge. Psaki answered that while the Administration supports freedom of expression and speech, the protest has extended far beyond the vaccine mandate for truckers. She noted that the Administration is in touch with their "Canadian counterparts" but she did not have any updates on specific steps the US government is taking. She was also asked if the Administration was worried about American truckers who have been inspired by the protests in Canada and are planning to launch a similar protest in Washington, D.C in March. Psaki responded that she would check on potential security measures being taken in DC, but noted that the trucker vaccine mandate is not negatively impacting the movement of goods. We are waiting on the official WH transcript and will circulate it once received.

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